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ROBERT JONES 211,871
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Rebels Want To Destroy Cuba's Fuel Installations

CPYRGHT

(Robert Jones is an expert on Central and South American affairs.)

By ROBERT JONES

Miami, Fla. — CIA agents and American businessmen are blocking what Cuban freedom fighters claim would be a knock-out punch against Fidel Castro. Ironically, the Americans are doggedly defending properties stolen from United States firms two years ago by Cuba's Communist dictatorship.

It is the formerly American-owned oil refineries and storage tanks outside Havana which have become the focal point of a quiet but bitter controversy between anti-Communist Cubans and the American businessmen and secret agents.

The whole question of ousting communism from

Cuba now seems to revolve around whether or not the oil installations are knocked out. So far, American in-

terests have blocked all plans to attack them. Cuban leaders in the U.S. now claim, however, to have enlisted the aid of "powerful friends in Washington." They say they are going to demand a showdown.

There is not much doubt that destruction of the petroleum installations outside Havana would dislocate the elaborate Communist machine controlling Cuba.

Lacking other forms of power, Cuba is run on oil. Without oil to generate power, every single electric motor and appliance on the island would cease to function. Cuba, and the Communists controlling Cuba, would be paralyzed.

Cuban transport and communication facilities are already strained to the breaking point. The island requires a minimum of 15,000,000 barrels of fuel oil a year. The Soviets, however, are shipping their little Cuban brothers only about 12,000,000 barrels annually.

AS A RESULT, most of the food Cubans eat today was delivered by truck from central distribution points last night. There are no reserves, neither of oil nor food. The entire Cuban economy now operates on a truck-to-mouth basis.

Several other important factors make Red Cuba's petroleum lifeline a supremely inviting target.

Most important, Cuba's fuel supply system is concentrated in Havana. All Soviet oil is shipped via the port of Havana. And, since the Soviets are unable or unwilling to send gasoline, all the oil must be refined in the Havana refineries.

Anti-Communist Cubans also point out that the Castro government is unable to house and supply large concentrations of troops. So the Cuban armed forces are mostly quartered in private homes and thinly scattered the length of the 800-mile-long island. That means that a strong uprising or guerrilla landing in any area would force the Reds to pour in reinforcements by truck. Without gasoline, Castro's mechanized forces would be helpless.

LEADERS OF THE Cuban revolutionary movement know all this. The Havana oil installations have, in fact, become a fixation with them. Time and again, Cuban rebels devised elaborate plans to destroy them.

And time and again, American oil company executives and agents of the Central Intelligence Agency have quashed those plans. One major oil company openly threatened to bring criminal charges against an exile leader planning a bombing attack on its expropriated holdings.

CIA agents are equally blunt. Exile leaders are constantly warned to keep hands off. How long the

Cubans will continue to obey, however, is a question. They now seem determined to take their case to the American people.

"Americans must realize," says exiled Cuban newsman Herminio Portell, "that the destruction of those installations would be a small price to pay for the liberation of my country from commu-

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